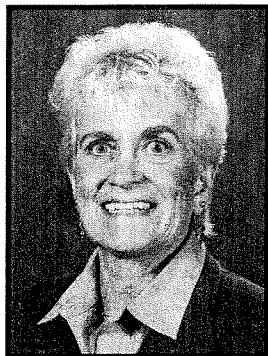


# Hammerstrom's

for the people  
in the 17th Senate District

# Hotline



State Senator

**Bev Hammerstrom**

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March 10, 2003



**LEGISLATION COMMEMORATES UNDERGROUND RAILROAD.** As Black History Month came to a close, a bicameral, bipartisan package of bills was introduced last week to commemorate Michigan's role in the Underground Railroad. The measures would create a Michigan Freedom Trail license plate, a Michigan Freedom Trail fund, and an Underground Railroad Memorial Highway. As many as 50,000 slaves escaped to freedom through Michigan as the last stop on the Underground Railroad, which helped thousands of escaped slaves to freedom. The Michigan Freedom Trail Commission was created in 1998 to work with the Department of History, Arts and Library to document, preserve, and support work that showcases the Underground Railroad as a vital part of Michigan's history. Monroe County most likely played a significant role as one of the major travel routes for runaways seeking freedom. Area residents are encouraged to look at their own family histories for possible stories that may have been shared disclosing local involvement in the movement. The Sojourner Truth Technical Training Center at Adrian College is leading a multimedia research effort to gather stories and information on the Underground Railroad. Individuals wishing to

volunteer as community researchers may contact Kimberly Davis, assistant professor of political science and communications arts at Adrian College, at (517) 264-3189, or on the Internet at [www.adrian.edu](http://www.adrian.edu).

**FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR AGRICULTURAL POLLUTION PREVENTION MEASURES.** For a limited time, the Department of Agriculture is offering matching funds to Michigan agricultural businesses interested in adopting innovative pollution prevention technologies. Up to \$50,000 in one-time matching funds is available to small businesses of 500 employees or less which demonstrate technologies that enhance operational efficiencies, reduce waste generation, or achieve environmentally sound reuse or recycling of agricultural wastes. The technology must improve overall company profitability, and the implementation will serve as a demonstration for encouraging other businesses or industries to adopt the technology. The deadline for submitting an application is April 4, 2003. To obtain further information or request an application, call David Herb at (517) 241-8176, or contact him by e-mail, [herbdw@michigan.gov](mailto:herbdw@michigan.gov).

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS TO CONDUCT FIRST MEETING.** In an effort to make recommendations to the legislature on how the state can maintain current and attract new business investment and good paying jobs to Michigan, the Joint Select Committee on Business Competitiveness will conduct its first meeting Monday, March 10 in Novi. Among the many issues the bicameral, bipartisan committee will examine are tax structures, tax incentives, technology, international trade, government licensing and regulation, job training and fiscal discipline. Members of the economic development and business communities are expected to testify before the committee and provide input to help shape legislation and policy decisions relating to business competitiveness for coming years. Subsequent hearings are being planned in Grand Rapids, Macomb County, Traverse City, Menominee, Bay City/Saginaw and Monroe.

**NONNATIVE AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES BILLS REINTRODUCED.** Last week I joined with two of my colleagues in the Senate to reintroduce a package of bills from the previous session aimed at protecting our Great Lakes and other waterways in the state from the invasion of nonnative aquatic nuisance species. If passed, Senate Bills 226-229 would prohibit the importation of any genetically engineered organism without the permission of the director of the Department of Agriculture. The bills would also make it a crime to possess or release certain aquatic species, such as the Chinese Snakehead, the Asian and Grass Carp, and the Rudd. You may track the progress of these bills on the Internet at the Legislature's website, [www.michiganlegislature.org](http://www.michiganlegislature.org).

**DID YOU KNOW?** Lake Michigan, which measures 307 miles long and covers over 22,300 square miles, is the largest body of fresh water in the United States. All of the combined bodies of water in the Great Lakes State are native—home to more than 149 types of fish.